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SUBJECT: VP ADEL ON IRAN'S VIEW OF SFA AND IRANIAN MEDDLING
IN IRAQ

Classified By: Deputy Political Counselor Rob Waller for reasons 1.4 (b,d).

11. (C) Summary: In a June 4 meeting, Vice President Adel Abdel Mehdi told S/I Satterfield that his recent discussions with top-tier Iranian Government officials had succeeded in blunting Tehran's intense hostility toward a USG-GOI security agreement. Claiming that Iran is less powerful in Iraq than it was a few months ago, Adel said Tehran views GOI security operations against Iranian-supported militants in Basrah and Sadr City as defeats and is re-examining its policy toward Iraq as a result. He said Iran's ambassador in Baghdad had told him Tehran is willing to stop using Iraq as a battlefield against the USG and to cease efforts to replicate a Hezbollah-like entity in Iraq, but Adel replied the Iranians must choose between support for the GOI's domestic enemies and normal relations with a Shia government that is friendly to Iran. Satterfield stressed that the GOI's best defense against Iranian influence is the strengthening of GOI institutions. Adel said he would press Prime Minister Maliki and Vice President Hashemi to settle the minor issues that stand in the way of Tawafuq's return to the cabinet, and said he thinks all blocs (with the possible exception of Tawafuq) are ready to resume negotiations over a hydrocarbons framework law based upon a draft text from February 2007. End Summary.

Iran Re-Assessing Iraq Policy

12. (C) Adel recently returned from an absence from Baghdad that began with a mid-May meeting with President Bush in Sharm-al-Sheikh and ended earlier this week with a three-day visit to Tehran. In Tehran, Adel said he met with "all top officials except Khamenei" including President Ahmadinejad, FM Mottaki, Ali Larijani, Jalil, and Quds Force leader Qassim Sulaimani. The Iranians have launched a "huge propaganda campaign" in the Iranian press against the proposed Iraqi-American security pact, Adel stated, adding that Iranian officials accused him of being the GOI's chief proponent of the deal. In response, Adel said he did not deny this role, but rather defended the GOI's right as a sovereign state to determine its own interests and to conclude deals as it sees fit, and demanded a stop to the propaganda campaign. He said Iranian officials were at first "skeptical and pessimistic" toward Adel's approach but warmed after "hours of discussion" in which he assured them that the GOI does not seek to "codify the status quo" through the agreement. He likened the GOI's preferred relationship with the USG to Turkish-USG relations, reminding his Iranian hosts that the Turks refused to allow the USG in 2003 to invade Iraq through Turkey. By the end of his visit, he claimed that he had persuaded some of his interlocutors to the extent that Larijani defended the GOI position to Ahmadinejad, but he says the Iranians asked him to change the name of the pact to something other than a security agreement.

13. (C) Asked about Tehran's relations with Muqtada al-Sadr, Adel said Sadr is "not an Iranian player" and that Iranian officials deride Sadr's political moves as "foolish and idiotic." Claiming that Iran is less powerful in Iraq than it was a few months ago, Adel said Sulaimani's Quds Force had "lost" by siding with and supporting Special Groups and that Tehran views GOI security operations against

Iranian-supported militants in Basrah and Sadr City as defeats and is re-assessing its policy toward Iraq as a result. He stated that Iranian Ambassador Qomi had sent him a letter last month that made three main points. One, Tehran is willing to stop using Iraq as a battlefield against the USG. Two, Iran is willing to cease efforts to replicate a Hezbollah-like entity in Iraq. Three, Tehran is willing to accept a constitutional government in Baghdad and will not try to press a "Wilayat al-Faqih" clerical state model on Iraq. Adel said he told Qomi this was all well and good, but the Iranians must now choose between support for the GOI's domestic enemies and normal relations with a Shia government that is friendly to Iran. He stressed to Qomi that Iraq is not like Lebanon where the Shia are a minority, not a majority like in Iraq. Satterfield agreed that Iran must indeed make a choice, and he stressed that the GOI's best defense against Iranian influence is to strengthen state institutions.

Arab Neighbors, Tawafuq Return to GOI, Hydrocarbons Law

14. (C) Satterfield briefed on his recent trip to Arab capitals, noting a new attitude toward engagement with Iraq in the wake of continued GOI progress on Sunni outreach/reconciliation measures, and - of particular importance to the Gulf, Jordan and Egypt given Hizballah's coup in West Beirut - GOI operations against Iranian-backed Shia militias in Basrah and Sadr City. Adel agreed that he also detected a new approach. Adel said Prime Minister Maliki and Vice President Hashemi are very close to an agreement on Tawafuq's return to the cabinet, adding he would press both men to quickly settle the minor issues that remain between them. When asked about prospects for resumption of parliamentary negotiations over a hydrocarbons framework law, Adel said all blocs (with the possible exception of Tawafuq) are ready to re-engage in talks based upon a draft law agreed upon in February 2007.

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